

## LOOKING BACKWARD WITH SATISFACTION AND FORWARD WITHOUT APPREHENSION\*

By WILLIAM TAYLOR McARTHUR, M. D.

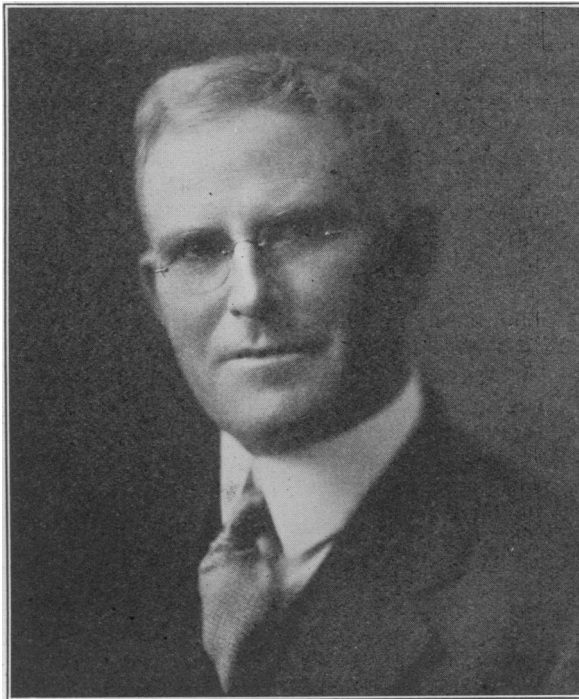
IT IS now more than two thousand years since Hippocrates began blazing a trail through a world steeped in superstition and ignorance—a trail for the physician to follow, so definitely marked that no one need mistake the direction. The main purpose of the trail is the advancement of civilization, the making of life sweeter and safer for man by removing or counteracting the dangers to life, either from within his own body or from his environment.

Ruskin lighted Seven Lamps of Architecture to guide the architect in the pursuit of his art. There are many lamps along the trail of medical progress which will furnish inspiration and resolve to proceed further in search of the hidden truth in nature. Cast your eye backward to the Classic Period—the golden age of Greece—and there at the beginning of our journey you will see a lamp erected by Hippocrates in the presence of Socrates and Plato, Sophocles and Herodotus, Aristophanes and Pericles. It is a great beacon light whose kindly and beneficent rays make clear the high ideals of our profession and the ethical relation of the physician to his brother physician, and of the physician to his patient. They are our first rays of scientific medicine, throwing light on cause and effect, and demonstrate the importance of the mind and senses in the role of diagnosis. They impress upon us the value and necessity of a clean, honest, and upright life, and of a humanity so altruistic and far-reaching in its help to the suffering, that it stops at "neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth," and willingly faces Danger or Death, though it be at the ends of the earth. They furnish the physician the highest moral inspiration he possesses.

From the middle of the second century to the middle of the sixteenth, medicine groped along through the Dark Ages with little light except that furnished by the Galen candle. Its rays showed very little evidence of either science or art. Magicians, quacks, and charlatans of every kind infested

the country, and our trail is rather dark for fourteen centuries. But with the Renaissance a new light appeared on the horizon—the anatomical lamp of Vesalius—which enabled the physician to get a knowledge of the structure of the human body by observation and dissection, and fitted him to perform his own surgery instead of relying on barbers and blacksmiths.

Quite near on a high mountain-top, along the trail, stands the lamp of Physiology, set up by William Harvey about the middle of the seventeenth century. While the anatomical lamp shows the structure, the physiological lamp reveals the function of these structures, and the various processes taking place in the life of man from the cradle to the grave. It is a remarkably illuminating light, getting brighter and more penetrating as the years go by. Further along the trail, we are busy admiring the Immunity lamp of Jenner, when, gazing one century in advance, we behold on a high mountain-top of achievement the most glorious light of all, the Pasteur lamp of



WILLIAM TAYLOR McARTHUR

Bacteriology. Its rays, like those from the rising sun over the surface of a lake, point onward—ever broadening and far-reaching. The trail is now an illuminated highway—illuminated by the lamps of Robert Koch and Lister, Ronald Ross and Gorgas, Walter Reed and Klebs, Osler and hundreds of others—in fact, more lamps in the last fifty years of the trail than in two thousand years before. "And the men bulk big on the old trail, our own trail, the out trail. They're God's own guides on the long trail, the trail that is always new." Surely, we can look backward with satisfaction.

The time is well spent in reflecting on departed greatness. "Great men are like great mountains; they lift our thoughts above the ordinary levels of humanity and act as an inspiration to us." "He who will not look backward to his ancestors will not look forward to posterity," is a maxim enunciated by Burke and sanctioned by experience as applied to the practical concerns of life.

Our heritage is our most valuable asset. The tendency of today is for action, rather than reflection. This is more noticeable in the young man than

\* Inaugural address as President California Medical Association, delivered at Oakland, April 28, 1926.

in the man of mature years. But with the years comes wisdom. "The years teach much which the days never knew." Reflection usually furnishes the inspiration for wise action. The recollection of burned fingers prevents a repetition of the injury. It is the experience of the past that governs our present action. The future we never reach, the present is fleeting and soon becomes the past, the past alone endures.

But we must not spend all our time in reflection. We must be up and doing. Movement is a law of life. Where we stand today in medicine is not so important as the direction in which we are moving. However, with such a noble heritage and lofty ideals for inspiration, and such wealth of experience to guide us, we will go forward lighting other lamps, pushing the trail further through the valleys and lighting the mountain-peaks, so that we may see how to eradicate cancer, tuberculosis, pneumonia, infantile paralysis, and many other diseases.

Mark Sullivan of New York, political prophet, editorial observer, and veteran newspaperman, speaking the other day before the Friday Morning Club in Los Angeles on the "Magnificent Achievements of the Past Quarter Century," gave first place to the work accomplished through medical science. To quote from the evening papers, he said: "The warfare against disease, as respecting the individual, is more outstanding than any affairs of the politicians. The lengthening of the span of human life, due to the inventions and applications of medical science, is the greatest achievement of the last quarter of a century." I am told that this statement brought forth hearty applause from part of the audience, while others wondered why the program committee permitted one holding such material views the privileges of the platform. Evidently the dissenting group became busy in the afternoon, for some of the next morning papers, while devoting much space to his address, never mentioned what Mr. Sullivan considered entitled to first honors.

While we feel indebted to Mr. Sullivan for complimenting us so highly on our work of the last twenty-five years, we will venture the prophecy that we will not only keep first place, but that no other agency or force having to do with the advancement of civilization, will, in the next quarter of a century, be considered even a close competitor with medical science.

In the last fifty-five years the span of life has been increased fifteen years. Much of this has been due to the knowledge acquired in diseases of children, and treatment by modern methods, as well as preventive medicine in general. The good work done by the Tuberculosis Association deserves much credit. But we are just beginning to warm up. We possess the knowledge now to increase the span of life another fifteen years and are prepared to do it, if we but get the full co-operation of the public. But such co-operation will come only gradually. Light travels fast until it reaches the human mind. Education has ever lagged far behind knowledge.

It will be 230 years on the 14th of May since Edward Jenner discovered vaccine against smallpox. Its efficacy is not disputed by any physician of recognized scientific standing in the whole world today.

There is no excuse for the prevalence of smallpox in any civilized community in this age. Yet, in one of our California cities in February, sixty-three lives were sacrificed to the moloch of ignorance. Out of this number not one had been vaccinated in the last eighteen years. The rays of light from the Jenner lamp have failed to penetrate many darkened minds and as a consequence the United States leads the world in smallpox; and among the states, California, the acknowledged leader in so many things, takes first place in this loathsome disease—a fact that is being widely published as a detriment to our material welfare and a reflection upon the intelligence of our citizens.

The death rate from tuberculosis has been cut in two in the past twenty years through the public taking heed of the advice given by the medical profession. We have the knowledge to banish typhoid fever, and it was practically eliminated from the army camps in the great war. Earlier than this, when twenty thousand of our soldiers went to the border, vaccinated against typhoid, only two contracted the disease, yet the number of cases and the deaths from this trouble prove that advantage is not taken of our information. In 1924, in a single locality in California there were 632 typhoid cases. In the same year there were 11,110 cases of diphtheria with 695 deaths. Toxin anti-toxin treatment would have prevented every one of these. New York State cut its diphtheria death rate in half in the past ten years by a campaign of immunization with toxin anti-toxin. California can do the same. The death rate from scarlet fever, tetanus, cerebrospinal meningitis, and many other diseases can be decreased 50 per cent by heeding proper advice.

The outlook for the control of disease in California, with all its sunshine, is not promising, owing to the very low standard of education required of those permitted to treat the sick. Hundreds using the term doctor (not M. D.) are unable to diagnose the very commonest affections—in fact, they claim that diagnosis is not necessary. Reports to the Board of Health are belated; the good results of quarantine are lost; and the contagion has often spread far and wide before it is recognized.

According to the American Society for the Control of Cancer, 100,000 people in the United States will die of cancer in the present year; one woman out of every eight and one man out of every thirteen over 40 years of age will succumb to the disease. It is estimated—and conservatively, I think—that this death rate could be lowered 35 per cent in the next fifteen years, if people took advantage of the knowledge we now possess. How can this be done? Simply by having a thorough physical examination by the family physician once a year; detecting the trouble in its incipency, when eradication is possible.

Cardio-vascular and renal diseases, after the fourth decade, go on undiminished in their yearly death toll. If these conditions were detected early, the span of life could be greatly advanced. We have the information, but fail to get it to those in need with sufficient impressiveness. Thorough yearly examinations by the family physician will furnish the opportunity to give the needed advice. Too many

people endeavor to increase their length of days by treating themselves, taking all sorts of nostrums or following food faddists.

Our slogan should be a thorough yearly examination—an inventory of your health on your birthday. The field of preventive medicine should be more definitely a part of our workshop. Urge people to seek advice when well, and demonstrate that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure; that anticipating trouble in time to avoid loss is cheaper and better and a greater life-saver than the old way of waiting until a disease has fastened its tentacles about you before seeking aid.

In this work the medical profession must do its part. The physician should be equipped to make the examinations thorough and reliable; for the people must be protected against incompetency. He must keep informed of the latest in medical discovery, with mind open and prepared to recognize truth, for, as Pasteur observes, "In the field of observation, chance favors only the mind that is prepared." One of the best ways to keep in touch and in step with medical progress is by attending and, when possible, taking an active part in the county society's work. Some physicians rarely attend except when they get into trouble and desire assistance. A Scotch minister said to his congregation: "The funeral services of Donald McGregor will be conducted in this church next Thursday at half-past two in the afternoon. I hope you will a' be here. I will be here and will preach a funeral sermon, and McGregor himself will be here, the first time in fourteen years."

The county unit can be of great assistance to the doctor by having part of the county society program consist of papers, demonstrations, and discussions on health-examination work. Every examination should have its findings recorded on a standard form.

But the duties of a county society are many, and they are not fulfilled when devoted exclusively to the education and good of its own members. It is largely responsible for the health of the community, and should be the central and directing force behind all health work in that section. It should call into its councils not only the representatives of boards of health of the state, county, and city, but dentists, nurses, and all agencies engaged in public health activities.

When we fully acknowledge our obligations to society and make an earnest endeavor to liquidate the debt, showing that our actions are in keeping with our lofty ideals, there will be no difficulty in getting full co-operation of the public.

The county society has obligations, too, outside of its own immediate neighborhood. Sister county societies covering large areas often need help. Have they good, properly equipped hospitals? If not, a study should be made and assistance given in establishing such. In these days of rapid transit one bacteriologist with a good technician could take care of the work in several such hospitals.

There is now a great cry for physicians for rural communities. I am not one who advocates the lowering of medical standards to supply such needs. The rural population is entitled to the best that scientific medicine can give just as much as the

urban. At the present time the physician, trained in scientific methods, finds himself greatly handicapped in his work in many rural communities owing to the lack of properly equipped hospitals. He feels that he is unable to make use of his knowledge; that he is likely to grow stale and rusty, if he remains in such environment; he wishes to make progress in his life-work and goes to a place where he can obtain the facilities to satisfy his desires.

Union hospitals can be established just as well as union high schools, and when such are assured and conducted upon right lines there will be little difficulty in supplying the demand for educated physicians in rural districts.

In assisting the sick man out of his troubles the physician should ever remember that the man has a mind, a personality, and a soul, as well as a body. By establishing his peace of mind, bolstering up his courage, and strengthening his faith in his present and further usefulness, a big advantage is gained in the treatment of any physical illness. We are not doing our full duty when we serve one at the expense of the other or attend to one and neglect the other. The cultists often get nearer to the real man by recognizing his complex nature than do many physicians.

Quite recently a prominent business man said to me: "I know that the majority of doctors have high and honest motives and are doing splendid, unselfish work for the control of disease and for the welfare of humanity, but there are many who, by their actions and words, inspire in a certain portion of the public a lack of confidence in the profession as a whole. I know of many instances where doctors have taken advantage of the patient's financial position and rendered bills for services so much out of proportion to the skill required and the time occupied that it seemed nothing other than a deliberate hold-up." Some physicians, like men in other callings, are worth more than others. Prices should be in proportion to the time given and the skill required and employed. In rendering bills the patient's financial condition should be considered and allowance made for all in need of such. This is usually done. In my opinion a doctor is entitled to his full fee where a patient is well able to pay, but he is not justified in demanding excessive amounts simply because his patient happens to be a millionaire.

The literature of today—especially the sensational novel type—and part of the modern stage tend to case reflections on the work and character of the physician and throw out in bold relief his sins of omission and commission. Fortunately, the vast majority of people do not get their impressions of the physician from the reading of sensational novels, which too often place the medical man on a low plane of civilization; nor do they attach much value to the cynical remarks of men like Bernard Shaw. Their estimation of the physician has been and still is high. It has been obtained by direct contact in the presence of sickness and suffering and death, and it will keep that elevated position just so long as physicians remain true to their ideals.

If you desire to hear the music of the Chicago Grand Opera Company on your radio, you must

keep "tuning in" until you get the Chicago wave length. And unless you get the proper adjustment, you will never hear anything except a lot of static—discordant notes that make life unpleasant. However, the man with patience and persistence and a desire for the best in life tries other adjustments and finally "tunes in." Suddenly, he seems transported to another world. Swelling strains of ennobling music pour forth, filling his heart and soul with gladness. What caused so great a change? Simply a slight adjustment.

The true physician looks upon his profession as an honor. He takes pride and joy in his work. He feels that he is contributing to the welfare and happiness of man, that he is helping to blaze and brighten a trail through a world of profound mysteries, making roads and building bridges through the swamps and morasses so that those who follow may pass safely over. His chief concern in life is to contribute to the betterment of the human race; to the relief of suffering, making life a bit sweeter and easier for others. He cheerfully joins with his colleagues in every line that tends to human progress. He is a pusher and lifter, not a leaner and trailer. He gives of his time and energy, and in the giving is the getter in a spiritual sense. He cherishes the ideals and traditions of his profession. To him such an heritage is a most valuable asset. The art and science in his work are never divorced, but go hand in hand, with the art ever uppermost. By kind words and deeds and sympathy and unselfishness he keeps ever in tune with humanity's wave length. He looks backward with satisfaction and forward without apprehension. And when the end draws near his pillow is made softer by the knowledge that he has the love of his patients, the respect and esteem of his colleagues, and that his work in this life has produced dividends, deposited from time to time deep down in the inner chamber of his soul, the only dividends of value—the only dividends that will be honored by Time or Eternity.

There is another type of physician, not a true physician, who is in the profession for what he can get out of it, his interest being purely selfish. The ideals and traditions of his forefathers never enter his mind: he has no use for the past; it is gone; and the future, he claims, has done nothing for him. He takes no interest in the humanitarian work of his confrères, unless as an objector. He rarely attends medical meetings or engages in any work toward the betterment of his profession. Such things bore him. He uses the term "doctor" as a commercial trademark or a cloak of social or scientific distinction. He attends to the call of suffering humanity at so much per, in dollars. He must be assured of his pay before he heeds the call. The medical profession to him is simply a commercial enterprise. He values his work wholly from a monetary standpoint, and fashions his bill, not from the ill or the pill or the skill or his time, but on the patient's ability to pay. He lives smug and independent, secure from the privations of want, yet dies, in time, from fatty degeneration of the soul.

And what is the difference between these two physicians? The one keeps ever in tune with humanity's

wave length; the other is constantly out of tune, and gets nothing but the jarring and screeching of static.

Humanity's wave length is the physician's wave length. Its ideals and its hopes, its aspirations and its prayers, are all one, and you can tune in quickly and easily by simply adopting the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

I look forward without apprehension, because I have complete confidence and faith that the great majority of men and women in our profession will keep in tune; will press onward and upward, lighting new lamps along "our own trail, the out trail." So long as there is life there will be sickness and suffering and need for the educated physician. May the heritage which we received from the men who "bulk big on the old trail" be cherished and enriched while in our possession, and passed on to those who come after us "unimpaired in dignity, honor, and usefulness!"

419 Pacific Mutual Building.

---

## NOW FOR 1927

Just as we go to press, preliminary news reports come from the C. M. A. session in Oakland that:

Percy T. Phillips, Santa Cruz, was selected as president-elect.

Robert V. Day, Los Angeles, vice-president.

Other officers are:

William T. McArthur, Los Angeles, president.

Emma W. Pope, San Francisco, secretary.

The councilors are:

Lyell C. Kinney, San Diego, First District.

W. H. Kiger, Los Angeles, Second District.

William H. Bingaman, Salinas, Third District.

Fred R. DeLappe, Modesto, Fourth District.

John Hunt Shephard, San Jose, Fifth District.

W. B. Coffey, San Francisco, Sixth District.

Oliver D. Hamlin, Oakland, Seventh District.

James H. Parkinson, Sacramento, Eighth District.

H. S. Rogers, Petaluma, Ninth District.

Robert Peers, Colfax, At Large.

Joseph Catton, San Francisco, At Large.

George H. Kress, Los Angeles, At Large.

Harlan Shoemaker, Los Angeles, At Large.

Morton R. Gibbons, San Francisco, At Large.

C. L. Curtiss, Redlands, At Large.

The next session will be held at the Los Angeles Biltmore at a date to be fixed by the Council.